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Washington Senate panel OKs education-funding plan

By Donna Gordon Blankinship
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SEATTLE – The Senate Education Committee has passed an alternative plan for fixing the way Washington state pays for public schools.

The bill contrasts with a similar measure passed in the House on Monday. It sets a different deadline for finishing the work ordered by the state Supreme Court in 2012 in its so-called McCleary decision.

The competing measures both come out of a bipartisan task force set up by the governor to tackle the last part of the McCleary decision. Lawmakers from both parties and both houses have been debating how to move the state away from its over-reliance on local school levies.

The measure passed by the House would order the 2017 Legislature to finish that work. The measure passed on Thursday by the Senate Education Committee would give lawmakers until 2018 to finish the work.

The Senate bill has been sent on to the Senate Ways and Means Committee for further discussion.